



## Biden orders gun control actions — but they show his limits

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Joe Biden put on a modest White House ceremony Thursday to announce a half-dozen executive actions to combat what he called an "epidemic and an international embarrassment" of gun violence in America.

But he said much more is needed. And while Biden had proposed the most ambitious gun-control agenda of any modern presidential candidate, his moves underscored his limited power to act alone on guns with difficult politics impeding legislative action on Capitol Hill.

Biden's new steps include a move to crack down on "ghost guns," home-made firearms that lack se-

rial numbers used to trace them and are often purchased without a background check. He's also moving to tighten regulations on pistol-stabilizing braces like the one used in Boulder, Colorado, in a shooting last month that left 10 dead.

The president's actions delivered on a pledge he made last month to take what he termed immediate "common-sense steps" to address gun violence, after a series of mass shootings drew renewed attention to the issue.

His announcement came the day after yet another episode, this one in South Carolina, where five people were killed.

Continued on next page



President Joe Biden gestures as he speaks about gun violence prevention in the Rose Garden at the White House, Thursday, April 8, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

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In this Sept. 25, 2019, file photo Giffords Law Center Senior Policy Advisor David Chipman speaks at a House Judiciary Committee hearing on assault weapons on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

**Continued from Front**

But his orders stop well short of some of his biggest campaign-trail proposals, including his promise to ban the importation of assault weapons, his embrace of a voluntary gun buyback program and a pledge to provide resources for the Justice Department and FBI to better enforce the nation's current gun laws and track firearms.

And while gun control advocates lauded Thursday's moves as a strong first step in combating gun violence, they, too, acknowledged that action from lawmakers on Capitol Hill is needed to make lasting change.

"Some of the other big-ticket items are legislative," said Josh Horowitz, executive director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. "And that's going to be very difficult."

Biden mentioned a formidable list of priorities he'd

like to see Congress tackle, including passing the Violence Against Women Act, eliminating lawsuit exemptions for gun manufacturers and banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

He also called on the Senate to take up House-passed measures to close background check loopholes.

But with an evenly-divided Senate — and any gun control legislation requiring 60 votes to pass — Democrats would have to keep every member of their narrow majority on board while somehow adding 10 Republicans.

Horowitz said "it's hard to think" who those Republicans would be, and though that doesn't mean it's impossible to move on gun control "we're going to have to change some of the people who are in the Senate."

Gun control advocates say the National Rifle Association's legal and financial issues have greatly weakened the once mighty pro-gun lobby and helped turn the public tide in favor of some restrictions on gun ownership. They say a shift in public perception will eventually trickle down to Republicans on Capitol Hill. But so far that hasn't materialized in votes. The House passed two bills in March largely along party lines that would expand and strengthen background checks for gun sales and transfers, a move that has broad public support. But most Republicans argue that strengthened checks could take guns away from law-abiding gun owners. A small, bipartisan group of senators is trying to find compromise based on a 2013 deal that would have expanded background checks to gun shows and

internet sales but was rejected then by five votes. Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut said at a rally in his state last week that he is talking to his colleagues every day to come a deal, and that he believes the public is more supportive than ever of changes.

Murphy acknowledged last weekend on NBC's "Meet the Press" that the background check bill that passed the House isn't likely to succeed in the Senate, but he suggested a more narrowly tailored bill might, and said he was working to build on that legislation to win over Republican support.

"You are going to have to make some reasonable accommodations if you want 10 Republican votes. And I am already talking to Republicans who are not unwilling to sit down at the table," he said.

Even some of the limited moves Biden took Thursday had already been making their way through the bureaucracy.

The federal government has been working on a proposed rule that would change the definition of a firearm to include lower receivers, the essential piece of a semiautomatic rifle, in an effort to combat the proliferation of "ghost guns" and stave off losing court battles on the issue.

The process started in the waning months of the Trump administration, according to four people familiar with the matter. Justice Department leaders and officials at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives had been working on language for a proposed rule since at least summer 2020, they said.

The proposal had gone through several layers of review by agency attorneys by last fall, and ATF

officials have met with gun manufacturers and others to discuss the possibility of expanding the definition of a firearm, the people said. They could not publicly discuss the details of the process and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

While Biden said the moves he took Thursday were just the beginning of his administration's actions on guns, it's not known what further steps he'll be willing — or able — to take.

With Biden already focused on passing his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure package, after delivering a massive COVID-19 relief bill, it's unclear how much political capital he has to spend to get any gun-control bills across the finish line. Asked last month if he felt he had the political sway to pass new gun laws, Biden told reporters: "I don't know. I haven't done any counting yet."

Some activists, while they praised Biden for his executive actions Thursday, said they wanted to see him more actively involved in the fight on Capitol Hill.

"I think he needs to engage directly and I think he needs to be counting the votes. I'm not sure what he's waiting for," said Igor Volsky, executive director of Guns Down America.

Volsky said his group would like to see Biden lay out a comprehensive package of reforms focused on gun violence, similar to what the administration has done on immigration. And he said Biden "could do more in using the presidential bully pulpit" to communicate with the public about the need for gun control measures and to pressure Congress to act.

"As he pointed out on the campaign trail, repeatedly, there's no time to wait to act on this issue. So my view is that this should be a priority for him," Volsky said. □

# Kentucky limits no-knock warrants after Breonna Taylor death

By PIPER HUDSPETH BLACKBURN

Associated Press

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP)** — Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear signed a partial ban on no-knock warrants Friday after months of demonstrations set off by the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor in her home during a botched police raid last year.

The law signed by the Democratic governor is not the total ban many demonstrators and some Democratic lawmakers had sought, but it also doesn't prevent individual cities and towns from banning the warrants completely. The measure drew bipartisan support in the legislature, where Republicans hold veto-proof supermajorities in the House and Senate. The law only permits no-knock warrants if there is "clear and convincing evidence" that the crime being investigated "would qualify a person, if convicted, as a violent offender."

Taylor, a 26-year-old Louisville emergency medical technician studying to become a nurse, was shot multiple times in March 2020 after being roused from her bed by police. No drugs were found, and the



Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear signs a bill creating a partial ban on no-knock warrants, Friday, April 9, 2021, at the Center for African American Heritage Louisville, Ky.

Associated Press

warrant was later found to be flawed.

"This is meaningful change," Beshear said. "It will save lives, and it will move us in the right direction. I know more needs to be done. I know the fight is not over." Members of the Taylor family stood behind the governor during the bill signing, at Louisville's Kentucky Center for African American Heritage. Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, shed tears

as she accepted the pen the governor used to sign the measure.

"While it's not the full legislation that they wanted in terms of a complete ban on no-knock warrants, they are satisfied that this is a start and a win in a deeply divided General Assembly," said the family's attorney, Lonita Baker.

Baker added that the family looks forward to working with lawmakers on future

legislation to further restrict the warrants and increase police accountability.

Under the new law, no-knock warrants must be executed between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. and officers are required to take additional steps to obtain warrants. Judges are also required to sign legibly when approving them and an EMT must now be nearby during execution of the warrant.

In the Taylor case, a no-knock warrant was approved as part of a Louisville Metro Police Department narcotics investigation. Nonetheless, officers said they did knock and announce their presence before entering Taylor's apartment, though some witnesses have disputed that claim.

In September, a grand jury indicted one of the officers on wanton endangerment charges for shooting into a neighbor's apartment, but none was charged in connection with Taylor's death. That was based in part on the presentation of Republican Attorney General Daniel Cameron, who recommended no charges against the officers who shot into Taylor's apartment.

One of those officers, Myles Cosgrove, was fired. Federal ballistics experts said they believe the shot that killed Taylor came from Cosgrove. The police department also fired officer Joshua Jaynes, who secured the warrant.

Virginia passed a ban on all no-knock warrants last year. The warrants are also not permitted in Florida and Oregon. □

## U.S. suicides dropped last year, defying pandemic expectations

By MIKE STOBBE  
AP Medical Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The number of U.S. suicides fell nearly 6% last year amid the coronavirus pandemic — the largest annual decline in at least four decades, according to preliminary government data. Death certificates are still coming in and the count could rise. But officials expect a substantial decline will endure, despite worries that COVID-19 could lead to more suicides.

It is hard to say exactly why suicide deaths dropped so much, but one factor may be a phenomenon seen in the early stages of wars and national disasters, some experts suggested. "There's a heroism phase in every disaster period,

where we're banding together and expressing lots of messages of support that we're in this together," said Dr. Christine Moutier, chief medical officer of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. "You saw that, at least in the early months of the pandemic."

An increase in the availability of telehealth services and other efforts to turn around the nation's suicide problem may have also contributed, she said. U.S. suicides steadily rose from the early 2000s until 2018, when the national suicide rate hit its highest level since 1941. The rate finally fell slightly in 2019. Experts credited increased mental health screenings and other suicide preven-

tion efforts. The number fell further last year, to below 45,000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a recent report. It was the lowest number of U.S. suicide deaths since 2015.

Many worried that such progress might end when COVID-19 arrived.

The pandemic sparked a wave of business closures. Millions of people were forced to stay at home, many of them alone. In surveys, more Americans reported depression, anxiety and drug and alcohol use. Adding to that dangerous mix, firearm purchases rose 85% in March 2020.

But the spring of last year actually saw the year's most dramatic decline in



In this Wednesday, March 17, 2021 file photo, morning fog blankets a cemetery in West Virginia.

Associated Press

suicide numbers, said the CDC's Farida Ahmad, the lead author of a recent report in the Journal of the American Medical Association that detailed the decline.

Suicide had been the na-

tion's 10th leading cause of death, but dropped to 11th in 2020. That was mainly due to the arrival of COVID-19, which killed at least 345,000 Americans and became the nation's No. 3 killer. □

# Police: Employee kills 1, wounds 5 at Texas cabinet business

**BRYAN, Texas (AP)** — A man opened fire at a Texas cabinet-making company where he worked, killing one person and wounding five others before shooting and wounding a state trooper prior to his arrest, authorities said.

Larry Winston Bollin, 27, of Iola, Texas, was booked into the Brazos County Detention Center in Bryan late Thursday, according to a Bryan Police Department statement. Jail records showed Bollin was charged with murder and being held on a \$1 million bond. No attorney was listed for Bollin in the jail record.

Bryan Police Chief Eric Buske told reporters he believes the suspect is an employee at the Kent Moore Cabinets location where the shooting happened. He said investigators believe the man used a handgun and was solely responsible for the attack, which happened around 2:30 p.m. Thursday, and that he was gone by the time officers arrived.

Two of the five people who were wounded at the business were hospitalized in critical condition, while three others were in serious but stable condition, according to a hospital statement. During the manhunt



This Thursday, April 8, 2021, booking photo provided by the Bryan Police Department in Texas shows Larry Winston Bollin.

Associated Press

for the suspect, he shot and wounded state trooper Juan Rojas Tovar, who remained hospitalized Friday in serious but stable condition, the Texas Department of Public Safety said on Twitter.

Grimes County Sheriff Don Sowell said about two hours after the attack, the suspect was arrested in Bedias, a tiny community

about 25 miles (40 kilometers) northeast of Bryan. Investigators were still trying to determine the motive for the attack, authorities said. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives sent agents and dogs to the shooting scene, said spokesman Deon Washington. Police asked people to stay away from the business during the investigation.

Bryan is about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest of Houston and is near Texas A&M University. With more than 86,000 residents, it is the seat of Brazos County.

In a statement posted on its Facebook page, Kent Moore Cabinets said "our hearts are hurting" and asked for "thoughts and prayers" for its employees and their families.

"We're all devastated by the tragic events at our Stone City manufacturing plant in Bryan on Thursday," the statement said. "We are fully cooperating with the police who are investigating this horrible crime."

The company, which is headquartered in Bryan, makes custom cabinets. It has design centers in nearly a dozen Texas cities and employs more than 600 people, according to its website.

One employee, Marc Barron, said he believes the gunman was targeting a specific person.

"I feel like he came with the intention of harming someone," Barron said. "He was just looking for the right person and, like, the right time."

Fellow employee Amelia Rodriguez said she heard several gunshots, describ-

ing them as a "boom," and ran outside only to realize the gunman was, by then, also outside. She said she went back into the building and hid.

"I don't have ... words to express the sorrow that I feel in my heart for all this stuff going on," referring to shootings in El Paso and elsewhere in the United States. "It's so said it had to happen to us, too," Rodriguez said.

"Everybody told me this guy is very calm and ... out of the blue he decides to do this," Rodriguez said.

Employee Matthew Hawkins said he heard what he thought was a loud crash, then realized it was gunfire, followed by initial confusion.

"It felt like a drill and then whenever the shots started it was like 'it's a shooting.' OK, I run, I guess?" he said, and then ran outside the building.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott offered prayers for shooting victims and their families.

"I have been working closely with the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas Rangers as they assist local law enforcement on a swift response to this criminal act. Their efforts led to the arrest of the shooting suspect." □

# Yosemite National Park to limit summer visitors due to virus



A light dusting of snow covers Yosemite Valley in this Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, file photo following a weekend snowstorm in Yosemite National Park, Calif.

Associated Press

**YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP)** — Yosemite National Park will require advanced reservations for day visitors during the peak

summer season to limit the number of visitors and allow social distancing amid the pandemic. Under the new rules, ad-

vance reservations will be required for day use visitors who enter Yosemite from May 21 to Sept. 30, the San Jose Mercury News reported.

The park's superintendent, Cicely Muldoon, said large crowds already have been coming to the park in recent weeks, and there are still cases of COVID-19 spreading in California, and other states and countries where visitors are coming from.

"The basic plan is to protect human health and safety and provide as much access as we can," Muldoon said Thursday during a meeting with government and business leaders of the communities surrounding

the park.

Rocky Mountain National Park and Glacier National Park are putting in place similar rules, which have been encouraged for decades by environmental groups but resisted by gateway communities whose economies depend heavily on tourism.

A similar day-use reservation system was in place last summer. It resulted in Yosemite's visitation rates dropping by half. This summer the number of visitors allowed will range from 50% to 90%, depending on what levels of COVID-19 are found in Mariposa County on the park's western edge. Currently, with Mariposa in California's orange tier, Yo-

osemite will allow 70% of normal summer visitation — or about 5,760 vehicles a day. "We think these numbers will allow people to enjoy the park safely," Muldoon said.

Reservations can be made at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) beginning at 8 a.m. on April 21. Each day-use reservation is valid for one vehicle for three days. Vehicles that arrive at park entrances after May 21 without reservations will not be admitted.

Due to pandemic concerns, park shuttle buses will not run this summer. Some, but not all campgrounds in the park will be open, with 585 sites available starting July 1, compared to 247 last year. □

# U.S. urges arms embargo and sanctions against Myanmar military

By EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations urged the international community to take “concrete action” against the military in Myanmar on Friday including an arms embargo and sanctions against its holding companies and those who profit from them, saying this is the only way to change the military’s crackdown on civilians following its Feb. 1 coup.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield made the appeal at an informal virtual meeting of the U.N. Security Council where Zin Mar Aung, a leader of a post-coup committee representing elected members of Myanmar’s parliament, urged all U.N. member nations to increase political, financial and security measures against the military “until the military’s violent attacks on civilians stop and Myanmar returns to the rule of law under civilian and democratic rule.”

Aung said the military has escalated armed violence in the last two weeks in ethnic states including Karen, Shan and Kachin, and before Friday’s council meeting, military forces known



In this Nov. 13, 2018, file photo, a merchant examines a jade stone displayed at the Gems Emporium in Naypyitaw, Myanmar.

Associated Press

as the Tatmadaw used live munitions and even rocket-propelled grenades to attack civilians in Bago Township south-central Myanmar. “The ambulances are not allowed to enter the area even though there have been dozens of civilian casualties,” she said.

The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar, which for five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to interna-

tional isolation and sanctions. As the generals loosened their grip, culminating in Aung San Suu Kyi’s rise to leadership in 2015 elections, the international community responded by lifting most sanctions and pouring investment into the country. The Security Council has called for a reversal of the coup, strongly condemned the violence against peaceful protesters, called for “utmost restraint” by the military, stressed the need

to uphold “democratic institutions and processes” and urged the immediate release of detained government leaders including Suu Kyi and President Win Myint. It also urged military leaders to allow the U.N. special envoy to Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, to visit without preconditions.

But Schraner Burgener, who just arrived in Bangkok, tweeted Friday: “I regret that Tatmadaw answered

me yesterday that they are not ready to receive me. I am ready for dialogue. Violence never leads to peaceful sustainable solutions.”

U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said later Friday that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres still hopes she will be able to visit.

Addressing the people of Myanmar, U.S. envoy Thomas-Greenfield said every statement adopted by a united Security Council been followed by further violence by the military against its people, “and we cannot allow them to succeed.”

“I want you to know that the United States stands with you. And we will do everything in our power, in coordination with our allies and our partners, here in the Security Council and elsewhere, to help you deal with this terrible situation,” she said.

Thomas-Greenfield said “the military’s brutality” against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state three years ago sent hundreds of thousands of people fleeing to Bangladesh, and the current violence has seen thousands flee into Thailand and hundreds try to flee into India. □

## Visitors tiptoe through the tulips in Dutch virus test

By MIKE CORDER

LISSE, Netherlands (AP)

— Finally, after bleak winter months of a coronavirus lockdown, springtime shoots of hope emerged Friday as restrictions were relaxed at a Dutch flower garden and other public venues.

Under a government-approved pilot scheme, the world-famous Keukenhof garden opened its gates to let a few thousand people tiptoe through the 7 million tulips, hyacinths, daffodils and myriad other flowers meticulously hand-planted throughout its manicured lawns by a small army of gardeners.

A maximum of 5,000 visitors were allowed into the garden, nestled amid the pancake flat bulb fields between Amsterdam and The Hague, if they could show proof that they had just tested negative for COVID-19.

Minke Kleinen, who visited the central city of Arnhem with her friend Ilse van Egten, said it felt like their “first legal day out.” The friends took rapid tests before setting off and got their negative results by email as they drove. “It feels strange that we can stand next to one another,” said Van Egten, giving Kleinen a quick hug. “It’s nice!”

The Keukenhof lost an entire season last year to the pandemic as the first deadly wave of infections swept over the Netherlands. Its scheduled March 20 opening this year never happened because of the country’s strict virus lockdown. The limited opening — six days spread over two weeks in April — is welcome to the 40 gardeners who spend months preparing for the annual spring season. In a normal year, the garden the size of 50 soccer fields can accommodate 10 times as many visitors each day. Park director Bart Siemerink had mixed feelings.



Far fewer visitors than normal are seen at the world-famous Keukenhof garden in Lisse, Netherlands, Friday, April 9, 2021.

Associated Press

“Of course, happy today. It’s the first day of Keukenhof 2021,” he said, but added that the park still felt different with such a relatively small number of visitors. “So it’s a good feeling that we can open, but this is not Keukenhof as it’s

supposed to be,” he said. In pre-pandemic years, Keukenhof’s paths, park benches and cafes are crowded with visitors from around the world taking photos and selfies with one of the Netherlands’ most iconic products the tulip. □

# Kim compares North Korea's economic woes to 1990s famine

**SEOUL, South Korea (AP)**

— North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called for waging another “arduous march” to fight severe economic difficulties, for the first time comparing them to a 1990s famine that killed hundreds of thousands.

Kim had previously said his country faces the “worst-ever” situation due to several factors, including the coronavirus pandemic, U.S.-led sanctions and heavy flooding last summer. But it's the first time he publicly drew parallel with the deadly famine.

North Korea monitoring groups haven't detected any signs of mass starvation or a humanitarian disaster. But Kim's comments still suggest how seriously he views the current difficulties — which foreign observers say are the biggest test of his nine-year rule.

“There are many obstacles and difficulties ahead of us, and so our struggle for carrying out the decisions of the Eighth Party Congress would not be all plain sailing,” Kim told lower-level ruling party members on



**In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un delivers a closing speech at the Sixth Conference of Cell Secretaries of the Workers' Party of Korea in Pyongyang, North Korea, Thursday, April 8, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

Thursday, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

“I made up my mind to ask the WPK (Workers' Party of Korea) organizations at all levels, including its Central Committee and the cell secretaries of the entire party, to wage another

more difficult 'arduous march' in order to relieve our people of the difficulty, even a little,” Kim said.

The term “arduous march” is a euphemism that North Koreans use to describe the struggles during the 1990s famine, which was precipitated by the loss of Soviet

assistance, decades of mismanagement and natural disasters. The exact death toll isn't clear, varying from hundreds of thousands to 2 million to 3 million, and North Korea depended on international aid for years to feed its people.

Kim's speech came at the

closing ceremony of a party meeting with thousands of grassroots members, called cell secretaries. During his opening day speech Tuesday, Kim said improving public livelihoods in the face of the “worst-ever situation” would depend on the party cells.

During the party congress in January, Kim ordered officials to build stronger self-supporting economy, reduce reliance on imports and make more consumer goods. But analysts are skeptical about Kim's push, saying the North's problems are the result of poor management, self-imposed isolation and sanctions over his nuclear program.

Chinese data show North Korea's trade with China, its biggest trading partner and aid benefactor, shrank by about 80% last year following North Korea's border closure as part of stringent pandemic measures. Experts say North Korea has no other option because a major coronavirus outbreak could have dire consequences on its broken health care system. □

# China report accuses US of causing humanitarian disasters

**BEIJING (AP)** — China accused the U.S. of causing humanitarian disasters through foreign military interventions in a report Friday that was the latest broadside by Beijing in increasingly contentious relations with the Biden administration.

The report from the government-backed China Society for Human Rights Studies said foreign wars launched under the banner of “humanitarian intervention” have not only cost the belligerent parties a large number of military lives but also caused extremely serious civilian casualties and property damage, leading to horrific humanitarian disasters.

“The selfishness and hypocrisy of the United States have also been fully exposed through these foreign wars,” said the report, which cited a list of what it

called U.S. aggression, from its intervention in Greece in 1947 to its opposition to the Venezuelan government in 2019. It cited conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria as major U.S. wars.

“Choosing to use force irrespective of the consequences reveals the hegemonic aspirations of the

United States,” the report said. “Only by discarding the hegemonic thinking, which is chiefly motivated by self-interest, can we prevent humanitarian intervention from becoming humanitarian disasters.”

Relations between Washington and Beijing have been fractious over U.S. support for Taiwan and sanctions over Chinese

policies including in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and U.S. calls for more candor from Beijing about the origins of the coronavirus pandemic have further roiled ties.

There have been no major changes on those issues since President Joe Biden replaced Donald Trump. Congress, meanwhile, is preparing to take up new legislation that would underscore the competition with Beijing in foreign affairs, trade and other fields. Asked Thursday about that pending legislation, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said the administration has been “heartened that there is a good deal of bipartisan agreement when it comes to how we should and could approach the government in Beijing.”

China has struck back with

heated rhetoric and visa bans against U.S. officials and others it deems to have damaged its interests through their criticism of Beijing's human rights record. Chinese officials delivered unusually sharp remarks at an initial meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin last month, in apparent response to U.S. sanctions against Chinese and Hong Kong officials considered responsible for repression in Xinjiang and the former British colony.

Congress should abandon any legislation targeting China and Washington should “do more things that are conducive to the healthy and stable development of China-U.S. relations,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing on Friday. □



**Chinese security personnel stand on duty near an art work outside the United States Embassy in Beijing on April 6, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

# Explosive eruption rocks volcano on Caribbean's St. Vincent

By DÁNICA COTO

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— An explosive eruption rocked La Soufriere volcano on the eastern Caribbean island of St. Vincent on Friday following mandatory evacuation orders from the local government.

Emergency management officials said the ash column rose about 20,000 feet (6 kilometers) high and that the ash was headed east into the Atlantic Ocean.

However, heavy ashfall also was reported in communities around the volcano, said Erouscilla Joseph, director of the University of the West Indies Seismic Center.

"More explosions could occur," she said in a phone interview, adding that it was impossible to predict whether they might be bigger or smaller than the first one.

There were no immediate reports of casualties from the eruption that occurred four days short of the 42nd anniversary of the last sizable eruption.

In the coastal town of Barrouallie, about 14 kilome-



Ash rises into the air as La Soufriere volcano erupts on the eastern Caribbean island of St. Vincent, seen from Chateaubelair, Friday, April 9, 2021.

ters (9 miles) from the volcano, evacuees trudged toward shelters carrying backpacks, duffel bags and shopping bags stuffed with personal belongings after the explosion. Some prepared to stay there, while others were expected to board cruise ships or go to nearby islands that have offered help.

Others still waited for trans-

portation to a shelter, including one family who stood for at least an hour by the side of a road under the sun with their children and suitcases as they awaited a ride from someone.

The volcano last erupted on April 13, 1979, and a previous eruption in 1902 killed some 1,600 people.

The new eruption followed

mandatory evacuation orders issued Thursday for the roughly 16,000 people who live in the red zone near the volcano in the island's northern region. Roughly 2,000 people were staying in the 20 shelters the government had opened, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves said in a press conference.

"We have had hiccups

here and there ... but by and large we are proceeding pretty well," Gonsalves said. He later wiped tears from his eyes and apologized for crying while he thanked people and other governments in the region for opening their homes and countries to St. Vincentians.

"On the dangerous road to Jericho, we have the good Samaritans," he said.

He said that depending on the damage done by the explosion, it could take up to four months for things to go back to normal.

As dozens of people streamed toward safer ground, officials worried the pandemic could hamper evacuation efforts.

Gonsalves said people have to be vaccinated if they go aboard a cruise ship or are granted temporary refuge in another island. He said two Royal Caribbean cruise ships arrived Friday and a third in the coming days, as well as two Carnival cruise ships.

Islands that have said they would accept evacuees include St. Lucia, Grenada, Barbados and Antigua. □

Associated Press

# Southern African leaders concerned by Mozambique's rebels

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) —

Five southern African leaders expressed their concern at the extremist violence in northern Mozambique and said they will consider "a proportionate regional response" at another summit in three weeks.

Issuing a communique in Mozambique's capital, Maputo, Thursday, the African leaders "noted with concern, the acts of terrorism perpetrated against innocent civilians, women and children" in the Cabo Delgado province and "condemned the terrorist attacks in strongest terms; and affirmed that such heinous attacks cannot be allowed to continue."

The presidents of Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe met with President Filipe Nyusi, fol-



Southern African leaders greet each other during a meeting in Mozambique's capital Maputo, Thursday, April 8, 2021.

Associated Press

lowing the prolonged assault in recent weeks on Mozambique's northern city of Palma. The leaders met as part of the 16-nation Southern African Development Community, known as SADC.

A team of technical experts will be sent to northern Mozambique to assess the situation and recom-

mend what action should be taken by the group. The regional bloc has been criticized for failing at previous summits to agree upon specific actions to combat Mozambique's crisis, which threatens to spread instability in the region.

More than 2,600 people have been killed and 670,000 displaced since

the rebel insurgency started in 2017, creating a massive humanitarian crisis, according to U.N. agencies.

Nyusi, in an address to Mozambique, said his government has asked for assistance from neighboring countries and other international powers, but it does not want to compromise its sovereignty.

Nyusi announced Wednesday that government forces had regained control of Palma, after a prolonged battle with the rebels. More than 100 of the well-armed rebels attacked Palma on March 24 and held more than half of the strategic center for more than 10 days.

"The terrorists have been expelled from Palma. We do not intend to proclaim victory because we are in an ongoing fight against terrorism, but we are sure

that if we are united, we will win," Nyusi said, speaking in Portuguese on state media.

At least 50 people were killed, including several who were beheaded, in the rebels' assault on Palma and thousands fled the port city, which had more than 70,000 residents before the rebel attack.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was accompanied by his defense, intelligence and foreign affairs ministers.

"SADC is deeply concerned about the continued terrorist attacks in Cabo Delgado, especially for the lives and welfare of the residents who continue to suffer from the atrocious, brutal and indiscriminate assaults," Ramaphosa's spokesman Tyrone Seale said in a statement Thursday. □

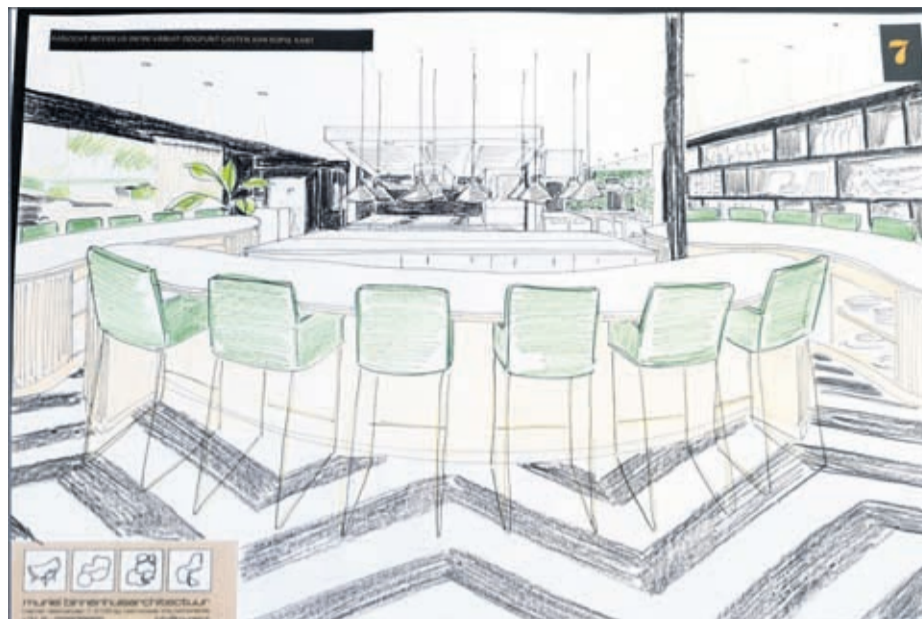
## New beginnings after the kitchen table and beyond with new restaurant: Infini by Chef Urvin Croes

**PALM BEACH** — After spearheading The Kitchen Table for five years, receiving notable recognitions in USA Today, The Daily Meal and earning the #1 spot on Tripadvisor's list of Fine Dining Restaurants in the Caribbean, Chef Urvin Croes has now moved on to higher heights. Infini, his new chef's table, which opened at the Blue Residences in November 2020, allows the Michelin-trained Aruban culinary artist to create gastronomic experiences unconfined by cultural or regional expectations. The former The Kitchen Table space has since been renovated into a suitable culinary studio to host this vision. In describing these changes, Croes says: "We opened up the entire kitchen and elevated the dining tables so guests have a front row stadium-like view of each step of the preparations. The spotlights, which we carefully choreograph, follow the plates' transition from blank canvas into culinary works of art."

**"It is a flavor that you cannot define, but you can create."**

He had been sitting on the first menu for over a year. Inspired by umami, one of the five basic tastes, and also Japanese for "essence of deliciousness", Chef Croes strived to organically produce this palate in each dish of the eight-course Chef's Impression. "It is a flavor that you cannot define, but you can create. Take our popular langoustine for example; we combined elements that are rarely paired together: the bitter, sour and salty flavors of the lemon cream, kombucha, green grapes, watercress and achiote, fused with the sweet and delicate taste of the langoustine induce ultimate umami."

After hosting the first menu for three months, the Executive Chef introduced a second tour de force in February 2021 — this time a pes-



catarian menu dedicated to Lent, of which Croes has to say: "I wanted to focus on the finest fish in the world, they are the protagonists of this season." Visitors can experience the second Chef's Impression until May 2021, at which point Croes and his team will reveal exciting new flavors for the summer.

**"Without a great team, there is no great chef"**

"There is very little I can do by myself. Without a great team, there is no great chef", says Croes, while raving about the six young professionals sharing his kitchen. All graduates of Aruba's EPI College and familiar faces to the Chef as each one has completed their culinary internship under his guidance. In fact, Infini's Chef de Cuisine, Ashwin Maduro, was Urvin's very first student, before relocating to Amsterdam, where he worked at several Michelin-starred restaurants, including &moshik (formally &Samhoud Places). Having recently re-



turned to Aruba, Chef Maduro is thrilled to be reunited with his first mentor and hopes to secure Aruba's space on the global map of unique culinary experiences. Similarly, after four years working in the two-Michelin starred restaurant Spectrum, Chef de Partie Moises Ramirez returned home to share his vast experience in formulating recipes with meticulous attention to detail and consistency. Further down the kitchen line, Chef de Partie Alvaro Yi, who has worked at the two-Michelin starred FG Restaurant, is all about expressing himself through cooking and plating to create art that you can eat. Mixologist Marc-Anthony Rannis brings eight years of experience in the fine dining industry to Infini. His fine craftsmanship is displayed in the unparalleled wine pairings and signature cocktails, which include his personally homemade syrups, garnishes and fresh local ingredients. Maître D' and Junior Sommelier Jessica Theysen, who previously



managed renowned Chef Dennis Huwaë's Restaurant Daalder in Amsterdam, is a true storyteller. From the moment she serves the Salinity welcome drink and the culinary tale begins, she takes you on an adventure around the world to discover never-before-tasted combinations. Then, towards the end of the night, it is his time to shine — Pastry Chef Jean-Claude Werleman, that is. After spending the last two years perfecting his recipes in the Pastry Department of the Ritz Carlton Aruba, Werleman joins Infini to continue exploring his passion for experimenting with colors and bold flavors.

**"It's time to show that Aruba is a culinary destination of its own"**

"The goal is to leave our visitors speechless. The look on their faces whenever they take the first bite says it all and it is priceless", shares Croes, with a smile. Reclaiming the spot of number one restaurant in the Caribbean is also in sight, but this time he will not stop there. "In the end, we want Aruba to be recognized for its culinary mastery. We have trained the best culinary artists right here on the island and they have proven themselves internationally in the most renowned kitchens in the world. Now it is time to show that Aruba is a culinary destination of its own. Who knows where that will take us; hopefully to infinity and beyond."

Infini located at Blue Residences currently serves a six-course Chef's Impression to up to 12 guests starting at 6:30PM. To make reservations visit [www.infiniaruba.com](http://www.infiniaruba.com) or call +297-699-3982. □



**infini**  
by Urvin Croes





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**Welcome to Tuscany Residence Aruba: Aruba's Luxury Residential Resort**

**NOORD** — Tuscany Residence Aruba is found in one of the most popular neighborhoods of Aruba, close to the shopping and nightlife of Palm Beach, and best of all it is within walking distance of the finest white beaches and clear blue ocean. Tuscany Residence Aruba brings luxury living to a new level.

180 exclusive properties will be built suitable for everyone's wishes. The buildings varies greatly in layout and offers amazing views. You can choose from 2 or 3-story villas with a private pool and a rooftop terrace, condominiums, townhouses. Tuscany Residence Aruba enjoys an abundance of luxury amenities and services. Soon a new concept consisting of 18, 1 and 2- story water villas. Everything is aimed at providing homeowners and holiday makers of Tuscany Residence Aruba with a relaxing stay.

**Dutch design**

Tuscany Residence Aruba is a residence that is currently being built and will develop in the coming years into a luxury residential resort with various types of homes and many amenities such as swimming pools, restaurant, bar, offices, meeting rooms, gym, wellness and more. The combination of the beautiful Dutch modern international architecture and the Aruban palm trees creates a luxurious Aruban feeling and relaxed atmosphere in this resort. Tuscany Residence Aruba is the perfect choice for couples and families. Bas de Groot, Managing Director of Tuscany Residence Aruba adds, "We differ from traditional building, our design distinguishes itself." At 8 minutes' walk from Palm Beach, designed in a European style with high-quality materials, on property land and with buying possibilities from condos to townhouses to villas, Tuscany Residence is a dream comes true. "We just completed the community pool and the first villa. Eight townhouses are ready and three are still available. There is lots to see, you are invited. Our quality will convince you."

**We take care of it all**

De Groot adds, "Our project is in continuous construction which builds confidence. Aside of the town houses and villa you can see the community pool now, providing you with the idea of style and quality of our residence." He continues saying that maintenance, property management, rental program and safety are taken care of. "You can log in from abroad and manage your property for rental or view your administration." The great thing about Tuscany is that it offers everything equal to a resort but you do not need to wait for an elevator to bring you up, worry about parking space or noisy neighbors. "We have got space and different size offerings making this more

a community feel rather than a packed condo building." He also emphasizes that the location is one of the best on Aruba as it is quiet and close to Palm Beach.

**Townhouses**

3 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms  
 Price starting U.S. \$ 347,000, community fee U.S. \$ 200/month  
 Still 3 Available.



**Luxury Villas**

3 and 4 bedrooms, 3.5 and 4.5 bathrooms, Private Pool  
 Price starting U.S. \$ 788,000, community fee U.S. \$ 275/mth  
 Still 2 Available.



**Coming Soon: 18 Luxury Water Villas**

The Concept: 18- 2 and 3 bedroom villas around 1 communal pool with covered terrace and garden at the pool side. Soon we will start the presale and if you are interested please contact us!

**Reasons to buy**

Reasons to consider Aruba property ownership, at Tuscany Residence Aruba

- Excellent price-quality ratio
- Beautiful designs & Quality construction
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# Today Is Going To Be A Good Day

Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do **BEYOND** the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. **Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.**

## Nature Calls

The Aruba National Park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. The park is open from 8am until 3.30pm. For more information, visit the website [www.arubanationalpark.org](http://www.arubanationalpark.org)



## The Lighthouse

No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. Call +297 699 0995 for more information.

## Kayak in the Mangroves

Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some workout -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. It's fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Aruba, find them on Facebook. □



# The Ross's love Aruba



**PALM BEACH —** Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority honored the Distinguished Visitors of Aruba as a token of appreciation for visiting the island for more than years and more consecutive years.

The honorees were:

**Todd & Elizabeth Ross**, residents of USA

The Ross's stated that they love coming to Aruba for its warm inviting sun, the gracious treatment from everyone and the lovely sea & climate. Marouska Heyliger, representative of the Aruba Tourism Authority, together with members of Marriott Surf Club, Jenny Boekhoudt and GM. Mr. Joop Bangma, bestowed the certificate of the Ambassadors and handed some presents to the honorees and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their vacation destination and as their home away from home for so many years on behalf of the Government of Aruba. □

# Amazon warehouse workers reject union bid in Alabama

By JOSEPH PISANI  
AP Retail Writer

Amazon workers voted against forming a union at a warehouse in Alabama, handing the online retail giant a decisive victory and cutting off a path that labor activists had hoped would lead to similar efforts throughout the company and beyond.

After months of aggressive campaigning from both sides, 1,798 warehouse workers ultimately rejected the union while 738 voted in favor of it, according to the National Labor Relations Board, which is overseeing the process.

Of the 3,117 votes cast, 76 were voided and 505 were contested by either Amazon or the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, which led the organizing efforts in Bessemer. But the NLRB said the contested votes were not enough to sway the outcome.

The union said it would file an objection with the NLRB charging the company with illegally interfering with the union vote. It will seek a hearing with the labor board to determine if the results "should be set aside because conduct by the employer created an atmosphere of confusion, coercion and/or fear of reprisals." The union accused Amazon of spreading disinformation about the unionization effort at meetings that workers were required to attend.

"Amazon has left no stone unturned in its efforts to gaslight its own employees. We won't let Amazon's lies, deception and illegal activities go unchallenged," said Stuart Appelbaum, the president of the RWDSU.

Amazon said in a statement that it didn't intimidate employees.

"Our employees heard far more anti-Amazon messages from the union, policymakers, and media outlets than they heard from us," the company said. "And Amazon didn't win — our employees made the choice to vote against joining a union."

The union push was the



In this Tuesday, March 30, 2021 file photo, a banner encouraging workers to vote in labor balloting is shown at an Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Ala.

biggest in Amazon's 26-year history and only the second time that an organizing effort from within the company had come to a vote. But Bessemer was always viewed as a long shot since it pitted the country's second-largest employer against nearly 6,000 workers in a state where laws don't favor unions.

That the labor movement in Bessemer even got this far was unexpected. Amazon has an undefeated record of snuffing out union efforts before they can spread. And at a time when the economy is still trying to recover and companies have been eliminating jobs, it is one of the few places still hiring during the pandemic, adding 500,000 workers last year alone.

But the pandemic also revealed inequities in the workforce, with many having to report to their jobs even while the coronavirus was raging, leading to concerns over health and safety. The organizing efforts in Bessemer coincided with protests happening throughout the country after the police killing of George Floyd, raising awareness around racial injustice and further fueling frustration over how workers at the warehouse

— more than 80% who are Black — are being treated, with 10-hour days of packing and loading boxes and only two 30-minute breaks. Workers in Bessemer approached the RWDSU last summer about organizing and the momentum had been building ever since. The union push was thrust into the national spotlight, attracting the attention of professional athletes, Hollywood stars and high-profile elected officials, including President Joe Biden.

During the voting process, workers were flooded with messages from Amazon and the union. Amazon hung anti-union signs throughout the warehouse, including inside bathroom stalls. It held mandatory meetings to convince workers why the union was a bad idea and also argued that it already offered more than twice the minimum wage in Alabama plus benefits without paying union dues.

Union organizers, meanwhile, stood outside the warehouse gates trying to talk to people driving in and out of work. It also had volunteers call all of the nearly 6,000 workers, promising a union will lead to better working conditions, better pay and more respect.

Mark Cohen, director of retail studies at Columbia University Business School, says that Amazon's warehouses are "juicy targets of opportunity" for unions because they can be organized one at a time. The company employs more than 950,000 full- and part-time workers in the U.S. and nearly 1.3 million worldwide. Moreover, the status of Amazon's founder Jeff Bezos as the richest man in the world makes him easy to vilify, especially when his company enjoyed record profits last year that climbed 84% to \$21 billion.

Cohen, who used to be an executive at Sears Canada, called retail a "rough and tough" industry, adding that "Bezos has built a high performance-based culture with expectations of performance and productivity at every level down to the shop floor. If that's not your gig, don't go work for them."

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail group, struck a tone of relief after the vote in Bessemer.

"The process works and employees can make an informed decision despite the enormous scrutiny under which this campaign was conducted," said Da-

vid French, a spokesman for the federation. "Union representation is a choice for workers, but many clearly prefer opportunities in a competitive marketplace that provides strong wages and benefits over the anonymity of a collective bargaining agreement."

Unions have lost ground nationally for decades since their peak in the decades following World War II. In 1970, almost a third of the U.S. workforce belonged to a union. In 2020, that figure was 10.8%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Private sector workers now account for less than half of the 14.3 million union members across the country.

Richard Bensinger, a former organizing director for the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and the United Automobile Workers, noted the large number of workers who didn't vote in Bessemer: "To me, that's all about the paralysis, the fear. They don't want to be supportive of the company but they are afraid to stand up for the union."

Bensinger, who said he is involved in early unionization efforts by Amazon workers the U.S. and Canada, spoke to a couple of those workers Thursday night "trying to tell them what happened so they wouldn't be discouraged."

Despite this latest defeat, labor experts and union leaders believe the organizing efforts in Bessemer could nonetheless inspire other Amazon workers to want to unionize at the company's hundreds of facilities across the country. And it could spread beyond the company, spurring action at Walmart, the nation's largest employer, and other big retailers, according to Benjamin Sachs, a labor law professor at Harvard Law School.

Sachs points to the 1930s, when the auto industry, then a symbol of the new economy, unionized and helped galvanize workers.

"I think no matter what happens, this is the beginning of a long story about unions and Amazon — not the end of the story," he said. □

Associated Press

# Steep decline in giant sea turtles seen off U.S. West Coast

Associated Press

**MONTEREY, Calif. (AP)** —

Scientists were documenting stranded sea turtles on California's beaches nearly 40 years ago when they noticed that leatherbacks — massive sea turtles that date to the time of the dinosaurs — were among those washing up on shore. It was strange because the nearest known population of the giants was several thousand miles away in the waters of Central and South America.

Their mysterious presence led researchers to a startling discovery. A subset of leatherbacks that hatches on beaches in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands were migrating 7,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean to the cold waters off the U.S. West Coast, where they gorged on jellyfish before swimming back. The epic journey stunned scientists.

"There are birds that go farther, but they fly. There's a whale shark that might swim a little further, but it doesn't have to come up for air. This animal is actually pushing water all the way across the Pacific Ocean," said Scott Benson, an ecologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's fisheries service in Monterey, who has studied the turtles for decades. "It's just a majestic animal."

But now, just as scientists are beginning to fully un-



In this December 2006 photo provided by Karin Forney, is Scott Benson, an ecologist and leatherback turtle expert with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service, posing with a female western Pacific leatherback turtle on a nesting beach on Santa Isabel Island in the Solomon Islands.

derstand the amazing odyssey, the turtles are disappearing — and fast.

In less than 30 years, the number of western Pacific leatherbacks in the foraging population off of California plummeted 80% and a recent study co-authored by Benson shows a 5.6% annual decline — almost identical to the decline documented thousands of miles away on nesting beaches. About 1,400 adult females were counted on western Pacific nesting beaches, down from tens of thousands of turtles a few decades ago,

and there are as few as 50 foraging off California, Benson said.

If nothing changes, scientists say, the leatherbacks — creatures that can weigh half as much as a compact car and have 4-foot-long flippers — could be gone from the U.S. West Coast within three decades, a demise brought on by indiscriminate international fishing, the decimation of nesting grounds and climate change.

"The turtles were there and we finally started paying attention," said Jim Harvey, director of San Jose State University's Moss Landing Marine Laboratories at San Jose State University and the study's co-author. "We got into looking at the story just as the story was ending."

The study provides critical, but devastating, new population information that doesn't bode well for the leatherbacks, said Daniel Pauly, a fisheries professor at the University of British Columbia and an international expert on reducing commercial fishing's impact on marine ecosystems.

"If you find the decline in one place, that might have a number of causes, but if you find the same estimate

of decline in two places that indicates something much more serious," said Pauly, who was not involved in the study. "They are really in big trouble." NOAA launched an aggressive initiative to save them in 2015 and will now release an updated action plan this month to inspire greater international cooperation in reducing the number of eggs pillaged on beaches and the number of Pacific leatherbacks entangled in commercial fishing gear.

"There is an opportunity right now to stop the decline, but we must seize that opportunity immediately and that will require an international effort by all the nations this animals interacts with," said Benson. "If nothing is done to reverse this course, this population will become, essentially, extinct in the Pacific Ocean." The leatherbacks have likely been foraging off the U.S. West Coast for millennia. There are six other distinct leatherback populations scattered around the world but none of them complete such a long migration. As many as 60% of the leatherback turtles that hatch in the western Pacific Ocean make the trip to California — and scientists

aren't sure why some do and others don't. Some go farther north, to waters off Oregon and even Washington state.

All the world's leatherbacks are under pressure, but the subset that migrates for months across the vastness of the Pacific faces unique threats that are particularly difficult for conservationists to counter. Leatherbacks in the eastern Pacific, which nest in Mexico and Costa Rica, are also experiencing a population crash from a sharp reduction in nesting beaches.

In the water, commercial fishing boats pursue swordfish in an international no-man's-land, where strict U.S. fishing laws don't apply, and fishing nets and long lines intended for swordfish can injure or kill turtles. They must navigate the fishing grounds of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Japan and other nations to reach the U.S. West Coast. On land, leatherback eggs on nesting beaches in the western Pacific are frequently wiped out by wild animals or humans, who collect the delicacies to eat or sell. Sand-mining operations and development on private beaches are also encroaching on leatherback nests.

In the U.S., swordfish fishing with long lines has been banned for 20 years from mid-August to mid-November to protect the giant turtles in a 186,000-square-mile (481,787-square-kilometer) zone off the West Coast. Most recently, California is phasing out the only small drift gill net fishery in the state by 2024, and the long-line swordfish fleet in Hawaii and California must shut down if they accidentally catch more than 16 leatherbacks fleet-wide in a season.

Last year, President Donald Trump vetoed a bill co-sponsored by U.S. Sen. Diane Feinstein, a California Democrat, that would have phased out a type of fishing with large mesh underwater nets known to ensnare sea turtles and other species. She reintroduced it in February. □

**Conceptis Sudoku** By Dave Green

2		6	8		9			
3								
8				4		1	5	
1				7		9		
		4		5				6
	2	7		6				5
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Difficulty Level ★★★★★ 4/10

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A woman walks in the hallway of the National Supercomputer Center in Wuxi, which hosts the Shenwei (Sunway) Taihulight supercomputer, in Wuxi in eastern China's Jiangsu province on Aug. 29, 2020.

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's government on Friday criticized the Biden administration's curbs on access to U.S. technology for its supercomputer developers and said sanctions "only strengthen China's determination" to invent its own. The sanctions announced Thursday are the latest sign President Joe Biden is sticking to the tough line taken by his predecessor, Donald Trump, toward Chinese tech industries seen by Washington as potential threats.

The step adds to conflict over the ruling Communist Party's industrial plans, access to American technology and accusations of computer attacks and theft of business secrets. A foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, accused Washington of misusing phony security warnings to "maliciously suppress" Chinese industry. "Containment and sup-

pression by the United States cannot stop the pace of China's scientific and technological progress, but will only strengthen China's determination and will to innovate independently," Zhao said. Zhao said Beijing would protect its companies, echoing Chinese warnings after previous U.S. trade penalties that often are followed by no action. The latest penalties block access to U.S. technology for researchers and manufacturers the Commerce Department said build supercomputers used by the Chinese military in weapons development. They can be used to simulate nuclear explosions and the aerodynamics of high-speed or stealth aircraft and missiles. Biden has said he wants better relations with Beijing but has given no indication he will roll back sanctions imposed by Trump on Chinese telecom equipment

## U.S. sanctions Chinese computer makers in widening tech fight

giant Huawei and other companies. The Communist Party has responded by declaring that accelerating efforts to transform China into a self-reliant "technology power" will be this year's top economic priority. Chinese supercomputers have set speed records but use U.S.-supplied pro-

cessor chips and other hardware. □



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# Back in Business: WrestleMania ready to rumble with fans

By **DAN GELSTON**  
AP Sports Writer

His time due as the next face of WWE, Drew McIntyre imagined what his crowning achievement would look like in the build toward last year's WrestleMania in his American hometown of Tampa, Florida.

"I beat 'The Beast' Brock Lesnar, I raise the title, I jump into the crowd," he said. He defeated Lesnar, yes. Then, silence. No pyrotechnics, no fans — digital, cardboard or packed in seats — no members of his family sitting ringside to celebrate with the Scottish-born star.

The mania was muted. Banished from the scheduled site at Raymond James Stadium, WWE ran its signature event inside an empty training facility in Florida. "The pandemic hits. I get a little angry, disappointed, frustrated when I found out it was going to be in the performance center," McIntyre said.

A year later, McIntyre gets a chance to do it again. Let's wrestle two!

WWE is set to welcome back fans for the first time in more than a year when 25,000 of the catchphrase-yelling, replica championship belt-wearing, sign-holding diehards are expected on both Saturday



In this April 3, 2016, file photo, Roman Reigns holds up the championship belt after defeating Triple H during WrestleMania 32 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Associated Press

and Sunday nights at Raymond James Stadium for WrestleMania.

"There's nothing like seeing the fans in person and getting a redo in Raymond James Stadium," McIntyre said. "They're going to blow the roof off, if there's even a roof."

The company built on the purported 24-inch pythons of Hulk Hogan navigated a pandemic year with live shows held in its ThunderDome setup, where fans appeared on digital video

boards and artificial crowd noise was pumped into the stadium for every match. Even without nonstop touring, WWE business has never been better: Already locked into long-term, billion-dollar TV deals with Fox and USA, WWE shifted its standalone streaming service to NBCUniversal's Peacock streaming service for, yes, another billion-dollar contract.

That's a truckload of fabulous moolah for a company whose ratings cratered

during the pandemic, with just 1.701 million viewers watching the Mania go-home show Monday night on USA.

Often criticized for a heavy reliance on past stars in its marquee events, WWE has John Cena, Lesnar, Triple H, The Undertaker and Bill Goldberg sitting this one out. Becky Lynch and Ronda Rousey — the first female wrestlers to headline a WrestleMania main event, in 2019 — are at home. Bayley and Char-

lotte Flair aren't advertised. The card, of course, in wrestling is always subject to change. McIntyre is back in the main event when he takes on WWE champion Bobby Lashley on Saturday. Roman Reigns defends the Universal championship in a triple-threat match against Edge and Daniel Bryan in Sunday's big match. Lashley headlines WrestleMania 37 after serving as Donald Trump's hand-picked representative for a "Battle of the Billionaires" match against Umaga and his rep, WWE CEO Vince McMahon, in 2007. The 44-year-old Lashley enters WrestleMania in the rarified air of Black champions in an industry that historically cast minorities as stereotypical performers. This year, people of color fill the card, with Lashley, The New Day's Kofi Kingston and Xavier Woods, and the Smackdown women's championship match pitting champion Sasha Banks vs. Bianca Belair among the handful of matches with representation.

"Of course, everybody right now is saying there's a lot of African-American or Black people in these big, high-profile matches and that's understandable because it wasn't something that was very prevalent before," Lashley said. □

# Miss America to be crowned in live event after virtual year



In this Dec. 19, 2019, file photo, Camille Schrier, of Virginia, reacts as she is crowned by 2019 Miss America Nia Franklin after winning the Miss America competition at the Mohegan Sun casino in Uncasville, Conn.

Associated Press

By **SUSAN HAIGH**  
Associated Press

**UNCASVILLE, Conn. (AP)** — The 100th Miss America will

be crowned before a live audience at the Mohegan Sun casino in Connecticut following a year of virtual appearances and delayed competitions due to the pandemic, organizers announced Thursday.

"To be standing here today is exciting, especially with what everyone has been through over the course of the last 12 months," said Mohegan Sun President and General Manager Jeff Hamilton.

The organizers had to postpone the planned 2020 broadcast and competitions until 2021 and extend the reign of the current Miss America, Camille Schrier, for a second year. This

year's event and broadcast are planned for December, with specific dates yet to be announced.

The Miss America organization said Thursday it had reached an agreement to hold the multiday competition's events and nationally televised finals for three years at Mohegan Sun, a resort casino in southeastern Connecticut that is owned and operated by the Mohegan Tribe.

In 2019, the organization had announced it was leaving Atlantic City, New Jersey, for a second time. Schrier, a former Miss Virginia who gave a colorful chemistry demonstration at Mohegan Sun in 2019, per-

formed virtual demonstrations in her backyard during the pandemic to get kids interested in science and made "appearances" from a studio in her basement, discussing drug safety and opioid awareness, said Shantel Krebs, chair of the Miss America Board of Directors. □

2	5	6	8	1	9	4	3	7
3	4	1	7	2	5	6	8	9
8	7	9	6	4	3	1	5	2
1	3	5	2	7	6	9	4	8
6	9	2	4	3	8	5	7	1
7	8	4	9	5	1	3	2	6
9	2	7	3	6	4	8	1	5
5	6	3	1	8	7	2	9	4
4	1	8	5	9	2	7	6	3

Difficulty Level ★★★★★ 4/10

# Olympic Gold: Men's Gymnastics Struggling to Survive

By WILL GRAVES  
AP Sports

The death of a 117-year-old program, one that captured championships and produced Olympians, ended with a gasp. And then a vote.

The fact the former did not alter the outcome of the latter offered a stark glimpse into the steadily eroding support for men's gymnastics at the NCAA level, one that will eventually have a ripple effect up and down the food chain for a sport struggling for relevance inside the U.S. Olympic movement.

That gasp. John Roethlisberger could hear it during a University of Minnesota Board of Regents meeting last fall. At one point someone asked how much money the school's athletic department would save by approving the proposal to cut men's gymnastics, men's tennis and men's indoor track and field, a move athletic director Mark Coyle called necessary to help offset a \$45-\$65 million deficit due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic. The answer? \$1.6 million. Or just over 1% of the athletic department's \$123 million budget.

"Everyone was appalled," said Roethlisberger, a three-time Olympian and a three-time NCAA champion for the Golden Gophers. "It didn't make a lot of sense. ... (We hoped) maybe we can reconcile and at least save our sport and they were like, 'Nope, let's vote.'"

And they did. Seven in favor of cutting men's gymnastics, men's tennis and men's indoor track at the end of the 2020-21 academic year. Five against. Minnesota's decision came two months after Iowa announced it was dropping men's gymnastics, men's tennis and men's and women's swimming and diving. Again, administrators pointed to the long-term financial impact of the pandemic.

The losses will leave just five men's gymnastics programs in the Big Ten and just 11 at the Division I level over-



Michael Moran, representing the University of Minnesota, competes during the Winter Cup gymnastics event Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021, in Indianapolis.

Associated Press

all, not including the three service academies. And it leaves the USA Gymnastics men's program in the precarious position of trying to reclaim a spot among the world's elite while dealing with a diminishing talent base.

There are 11,000 boys or men enrolled in USA Gymnastics, down from over 13,000 in 2007. With only 6.3 scholarships available per school at Division I, opportunities to compete and have at least a portion of their college education paid for are becoming more and more scarce.

Unlike women's gymnastics in the United States, where athletes typically peak in their late teens before moving on or being pushed aside by the next wave, most male gymnasts don't hit their prime until their mid-20s, making the NCAA level the perfect feeder system.

For decades USA Gymnastics has stuffed its Olympic team with NCAA veterans. Gymnasts that competed in college or trained alongside collegians have accounted for nearly 75% (26 of 36) of the U.S. Olympic spots (alternates included) this millennium.

It will almost certainly be the case again when the 2021 team is announced this summer, a group likely led by NCAA champion

and U.S. national champions Sam Mikulak and Yul Moldauer.

It's a group Shane Wiskus plans to be a part of, one of the reasons he left Minnesota last fall for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. It was a move he felt necessary to give him the best chance at making it to Tokyo. It was also a matter of survival. The USOPTC will be around in a year. The Minnesota program will not, at least not at the Division I level.

"(Support at the NCAA level) is definitely dwindling and I fear that if this isn't a wake-up call and if this doesn't get some real change to happen within NCAA then I fear that more programs could be cut and NCAA gymnastics could go extinct," said Wiskus, a senior who studied remotely this semester and tied for the Big Ten all-around title last week.

Wiskus is lucky in that he had options. Things are far murkier for teammate Mike Moran. A junior from Morristown, New Jersey, Moran admits there were people within his inner circle who discouraged him from competing collegiately because they viewed his chosen sport as a "dying entity." Which makes the pain of its end all the more acute. Moran is a longshot at best

to make the 2021 Olympic team, but his passion and dedication are an important part of the recipe it takes for Olympic programs to thrive.

"Less than 1% of college athletes go to the Olympics but they get pushed by the masses," said Brett McClure, a 2004 Olympian and former college head coach at Cal who now serves as the high-performance director for the USA Gymnastics men's program.

And the masses are shrinking.

"USA Gymnastics looks at the NCAA like the NFL looks at college football," Roethlisberger said. "Each team is like a mini-Olympic training center. When all that goes away, you have two coaches at USOTC that can carry 15 guys. Look at what that is going to do to your feeder pool. You're going to see a stream of guys falling out because they have to worry about their future."

A decision that — like the one Moran faces — could come in their early 20s. It could also come far earlier. McClure and everyone else involved in the sport understands the metrics. Football and men's basketball pay a massive chunk of the bills. Athletic directors are increasingly concerned about what the shifting economics mean

to Olympic sports. Nearly 80% of the 558 U.S. athletes at the Rio Games in 2016 came out of an American college program.

Most of the 85 programs cut by Division I universities since the coronavirus pandemic hit last year have involved Olympic sports. Next on the horizon are proposals being debated by the NCAA and in Congress that would allow players to cut sponsorship deals and make money off their names, likeness and images (NIL). A more far-reaching bill proposes revenue sharing between the sports programs and athletes.

That likely means even more money funneled into revenue-generating sports, an idea that clashes with what the ideal of the college athletic experience is supposed to be. Or, at least what it used to be.

"College athletics as we know it for a long time is no longer going to be the way it's been," Minnesota coach Mike Burns said. "Downsizing and streamlining is probably the direction they're all thinking."

Mark Williams, the longtime Oklahoma coach who also led the 2016 U.S. Olympic team and has guided the Sooners to nine national championships, is fearful of what lies ahead if the NCAA model no longer becomes sustainable.

"Our budgets are not going to be easily replicated by the USOTC if we go away," he said.

It's an "if" that will become a reality at Minnesota and Iowa later this month. Ironically, the Golden Gophers will host the 2021 NCAA National Collegiate Men's Gymnastics Championships on April 16-17.

Wiskus will be out there. Moran and the rest of his Minnesota, too. At some point, Moran will look out across the arena and ponder his future, and maybe his sport.

"It's kind of a morbid way to approach it, it's the same for everything else in life, how do you approach life when you know there's death at the end?" he said.

□

# Buxton buzz: Twins excited by budding star's powerful start

**MINNEAPOLIS (AP)** — Since selecting Byron Buxton with the second overall pick in the 2012 draft, the Minnesota Twins have waited patiently for their center fielder to perform at his superstar potential for a full season.

Perhaps this will be the year that Buxton puts together all of that speed, power and skill — and stays away from those ruinous injuries while doing it.

There's never been a doubt about his ability to inspire and entertain.

"Everybody in this room has got a purpose on our team, but he's got something special. He brings a lot of energy," starting pitcher José Berríos said. "The fastest in our game, obviously, in center field. Also, when he's healthy, he can hit and run. We are seeing it so far this season. I think he feels pretty good. That's who Byron is. The guy can do this, 100%."

Buxton has four home runs in 19 at-bats, one of four players in the majors to hit that many over the first eight days of the season. Throw in three doubles, and his way-too-early-to-



Minnesota Twins' Byron Buxton watches his solo home run during the eighth inning of a baseball game against the Detroit Tigers, Tuesday, April 6, 2021, in Detroit.

Associated Press

matter-but-just-for-the-fun-of-it slugging percentage is a staggering 1.211. Buxton's streak of six consecutive games with an extra-base hit is the longest of his career.

The fun started in the opener at Milwaukee, when he hit a homer estimated at 456 feet against Brewers sidearm Eric Yardley.

"I went up there and had a plan," Buxton said after that game. "I literally said, 'He's going to throw me a slider,' so I went up there and sat slider. That's where the experience part comes in. I feel confident enough now where it doesn't really matter what you throw to me. I'll sit on breaking pitches. I'm starting to realize how

quick my hands are to react to fastballs. Once you get to that point, it's pretty scary."

He is 27 now, yet nowhere near his peak.

"Watching him just completely change ballgames single-handedly is just something that never gets old," Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said.

Buxton batted fourth on Thursday in the home opener against Seattle, just the second time in his career he appeared in the cleanup spot.

His track-star speed — on the bases and in the field — has long been enough to make him a fixture in the lineup. Progress at the plate has been far more elusive. Staying healthy has been the biggest problem, in part due to his fearlessness roaming center field, but when healthy he's also endured several rough stretches with the bat over six years in the major leagues. Only once has he played in more than 92 games.

Now in the heart of a lineup that two seasons ago set the all-time record for home runs, Buxton has begun to show he can do so much more than make those diving catches.

"He's finding the barrel, and it's just coming off so hot right now," Baldelli said.

He was as anchored as ever in the weight room over the winter, bulking up his upper body to help provide more padding as further prevention for injuries. □

## Dodgers' Roberts thinks Bauer being 'singled out' by umps



Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Trevor Bauer throws against the Oakland Athletics during the first inning of a baseball game in Oakland, Calif., Wednesday, April 7, 2021.

Associated Press

By **GREG BEACHAM**  
AP Sports Writer

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said he believes right-hander Trevor Bauer is being "singled out" by Major League Baseball after umpires in Oakland collected several baseballs he threw in his last start,

apparently to examine for foreign substances.

Roberts also acknowledged Friday that he has noticed umpires collecting sample balls from every pitcher as part of the sport's crackdown this season on pitchers tampering with balls.

But the World Series-win-

ning manager openly wondered why only Bauer's name appeared as an apparent target of MLB's investigation in a report by The Athletic on Thursday. "I just hope that our player is not singled out," Roberts said. "That's the one thing I want to guard against." When asked directly if he felt Bauer is being singled out, Roberts replied: "At this point, yeah. ... I don't know (why). That's the only name I've heard floated around."

In his pregame news conference before the Dodgers received their World Series rings in their home opener at Dodger Stadium, Roberts wondered why Bauer was specifically mentioned in The Athletic's report, which was based on unnamed sources.

"I've noticed every game so far, they've taken balls

out of play" from every pitcher, Roberts said.

Bauer reacted to the report on Twitter on Thursday, writing: "wonder where the articles about balls from every other pitcher being taken out of play in literally every other game this season are? Also lol to (at)MLB who already has 'sources' talking to gossip bloggers about a supposedly confidential process a week into the season."

Baseballs loaded with foreign substances such as pine tar typically have higher spin rates when thrown properly, improving the movement of both fastballs and breaking pitches.

MLB disciplinarian Mike Hill sent a memorandum to all 30 teams in late March announcing an increase in the monitoring of baseballs. Statcast data is also

being reviewed by the commissioner's office to analyze spin rate changes among pitchers and comparing game data with career norms.

Bauer's spin rates have gone up and down during his career, and he has spoken openly about the efficacy of using foreign substances to improve pitches, saying in 2018 that the competitive advantage created is significant, and that cheating is likely impossible to police.

Bauer's spin rates rose significantly last season when he won the NL Cy Young award with Cincinnati, but he is far from the only pitcher with improvement in that area.

Bauer pitched 6 2/3 innings of three-hit ball against the Athletics on Wednesday in his second straight strong start for his new team. □